

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIAGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9174
USDEL FRANCE

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E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PINS MILI VS
SUBJECT: WEEKLY SITREP, 20-25 MARCH 1973

FOL TEL SENT ACTION IMMEDIATE SAIAGON FROM CAN THO DTD MAR.
25, 1973 RPTD TO YOU FOR YOUR INFO

QUOTE CONFIDENTIAL CAN THO 0086

1. SUMMARY: THE BATTLE FOR ENTRY POINTS HAS BROKEN OUT ANEW. THE MOST SERIOUS VC/ NVA ATTACKS HAVE BEEN LAUNCHED IN NORTHERN KIEN PHONG PROVINCE. THE PRECIPITATE POLISH AND HUNGARIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM TRI TON HAS SHAKEN ICCS REGION VII BUT OTHER TEAMS IN THE REGION ARE CONTINUING " OBSERVATIONS." THE GVN HAS STEPPED UP EFFORTS TO SECURE ITS HOLD ON POPULATION IN AREAS SUBJECT TO VC INFLUENCE. ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, GVN OFFICIALS ARE DRAWING UP VILLAGE ELECTION SCHEDULES. END SUMMARY.

2. SECURITY SITUATION: THE VC/ NVA MOUNTED AN OFFENSIVE LAST WEEK TO SEIZE THE HONG NGU- CAI CAI AREAS AS A PORT OF ENTRY FOR RESUPPLY. THE COMMUNISTS COMMITTED TWO, POSSIBLE THREE, REGIMENTS UNDER NVA 6 TH DIVISON CONTROL. ARVN HAS SUPPLEMENTED THE TWO REGIMENTS FACING THE NVA WITH AN ADDITIONAL BATTALION OF 9 TH DIVISION AND AN ARMORED CAVALRY TROOP. THE AMOUNTY OF FORCES COMMITTED BY BOTH SIDES IN THE HONG NGU- CAI CAI AREA IS GREATER THAN IN THE CEASEFIRE OFFENSIVE WHEN ARVN REPULSED A SIMILAR NVA ATTACK. THE NVA PROBABLY HAS GREATER RESERVES NOW THAN IT

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DID IN THE EARLIER ACTION WHICH WAS PART OF A COUNTRY- WIDE OFFENSIVE.

3. IN SIMILAR ATTEMPTS TO OPEN SUPPLY ROUTES THE VC/ NVA CONTINUES TO MAKE ITS PRESENCE FELT BY ATTACKS BY FIRE AND HARASSMENTS AROUND TRI TON, HA TIEN AND THE AN XUYEN- BAC LIEU COASTAL BORDER AREAS. THE VC/ NVA MAY BE SEEKING A COASTAL ENTRY POINT IN THE LATTER TWO AREAS. MG NGHI, MRIV COMMANDER, IS CONFIDENT THE GVN CAN CONTINUE TO DEFEAT VC/ NVA EFFORTS TO OBTAIN ENTRY POINTS AS IT DID IN THE CEASEFIRE OFFENSIVE. HE HAS POSITIONED SUFFICIENT FORCES IN EACH THREATENED AREA TO MEET WHAT WE BELIEVE THE VC/ NVA ARE PRESENTLY CAPABLE OF MUSTERING.

4. ICCS/ JMC: THE POLES AND HUNGARIANS ABANDONDED TRI TON MARCH 23 WITHOUT CONSULTING WITH THEIR CANADIAN AND INDONEASIAN COLLEAGUES. THE UNEXPECTED MOVE ANGERED REGION VII CANADIAN ICCS OFFICERS. THE ICCS PRESENCE IN HONG NGU, WHERE THERE IS NO JMC, AND IN TRI TON IS TENUOUS BUT CANADIANS AND INDONEASIANS AT BOTH REGIONAL ICCS HEADQUARTERS HAVE EXPRESSED DETERMINATION TO KEEP THEIR TEAMS IN PLACE.

5. OTHER REGION VII TEAMS ARE CONDUCTING INVESTIGATIONS AND " OBSERVATIONS"-- FIFTY- TWO COMPLETED OR UNDER WAY AS OF MARCH 25. REGION VI ICCS REMAINS DORMANT. THE IMPENDING DISSOLUTION OF THE FPJMC WILL PROBABLY TAKE SOME OF THE STEAM OUT OF ICCS. THE US JMC HAS GIVEN THE ICCS AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT MEASURE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MATERIAL SUPPORT. IF THE PRG DEPARTS AS EXPECTED, THE ICCS WILL LIKELY BE MORE CAUTIOUS ABOUT INVESTIGATING INCIDENTS IN AREAS SUBJECT TO VC/ NVA ATTACKS BY FIRE.

6. GVN ACTIVITY: (A) POPULATION CONTROL: THE GVN IS PLANNING TO RELOCATE UP TO 20,000 PEOPLE IN FIVE PROVINCES TO MORE SECURE AREAS. PLANS CALL FOR RELOCATING SMALL CLUSTERS OF FAMILIES SCATTERED ABOUT IN MARGINALLY SECURE AREAS. THE GVN WILL MOVE THEM A FEW KILOMETERS AT MOST INTO AREAS MORE CLOSELY UNDER GVN CONTROL, IN THE VICINITY OF PUTPOSTS OR ALONG SECURED ROADS. REFUGEE BENEFITS WILL BE PAID.

(B). CHAU DOC OFFICIALS CONTINUE TO CARE FOR CAMBODIAN REFUGEES FLEEING INTO VIETNAM. ALMOST 10,000 CAMBODIANS HAVE ARRIVED IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS. A SLOW- DOWN IN SHIP TRAFFIC ON THE MEKONG THWARTED GVN PLANS TO SEND MORE CAMBODIANS BACK TO PHNOM PENH LAST WEEK.

(C). VILLAGE ELECTIONS: THE GVN ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO HOLD VILLAGE COUNCIL ELECTIONS IN ALL VILLAGES DUE TO HAVE ELECTIONS IN 1972 AND 1973. PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS HAVE BEGUN TO PLAN FOR ELECTIONS IN THE MAY TO AUGUST PERIOD AND ARE CURRENTLY DRAFTING

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SCHEDULES. KIEN TUONG WILL HOLD THE FIRST ELECTIONS. IN A

RECENT STATEMENT, MG NGHI IMPLIED HE WISHED TO LIMIT THE NUMBER OF ELECTIONS TO THOSE VILLAGES HE IS SURE THE GVN CONTROLS. THE DEMOCRACY PARTY WILL COMPETE BUT IN SECURE AREAS WILL PROBABLY PERMIT NON- COMMUNIST CANDIDATES TO RUN. ACCORDING TO SOURCES IN BA XUYEN, THE DP MAY SEEK TO MONOPOLIZE VILLAGE COUNCIL SEATS IN LESS SECURE AREAS.

WISNER UNQUOTE

BUNKER

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